

WE CLAIM:

1. In a telecommunications network including a switch pool and a plurality of access nodes served by the switch pool, a method of associating a querying switch with a responsive access node comprising the steps of:

assigning a first switch of the switch pool to be a handling switch for queries received from the plurality of access nodes, wherein each query seeks a response from a particular target access node;

the handling switch directing the queries to the plurality of access nodes of the network for the purpose of eliciting responses from respective target access nodes;

the handling switch receiving query responses from target access nodes; and

assigning a subsequent switch of the switch pool as the handling switch and de-assigning the first switch.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein one or both of the assigning steps further comprise the steps of:

notifying querying access nodes of the assignment of a particular switch of the switch pool as a handling switch;

waiting a time interval; and subsequently

notifying responding access nodes of the assignment of a particular switch of the switch pool as a handling switch.

3. The method of claim 2 further comprising the step of computing the average time interval between a query and corresponding response on the network, and using a time greater than or equal to the average time as the waiting time interval.

4. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of counting handling switch transactions and assigning a subsequent switch of the switch pool as the handling switch on the basis of the count.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of monitoring the load level and assigning a subsequent switch of the switch pool as the handling switch of the basis of the load level.

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of monitoring the time elapsed since assignment of the handling switch and assigning a subsequent switch of the switch pool as the handling switch on the basis of the elapsed time.

7. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of, after assigning a subsequent switch of the switch pool as the handling switch, forwarding outstanding query responses to the first handling switch.

8. In a Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) network including a Mobile Switching Center pool (MSC pool) and a plurality of Base Station Controllers (BSCs) served by the MSC pool, a method of associating a querying MSC with a responding BSC, comprising the steps of:

assigning a first MSC of the MSC pool to be a handling MSC for queries received from the plurality of BSCs, wherein each query seeks a response from a particular BSC;

the handling MSC directing the queries to the BSCs of the network for the purpose of eliciting responses from respective target BSCs;

the handling MSC receiving query responses from target BSCs; and

assigning a second MSC of the MSC pool as the handling MSC and de-assigning the first MSC.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein the assigning step further comprises the steps of:

notifying querying BSCs of the assignment of a particular MSC of the MSC pool as a handling MSC;

waiting a time interval; and subsequently

notifying responding BSCs of the assignment of a particular MSC of the MSC pool as a handling MSC.

10. The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of computing the average time interval between a query and corresponding response on the network, and using a time greater than or equal to the average time as the waiting time interval.

11. The method of claim 8 further comprising the steps of counting handling MSC transactions and assigning a second MSC of the MSC pool as the handling MSC on the basis of the count.

12. The method of claim 8 further comprising the steps of monitoring the load level and reassigning a different MSC of the MSC pool as the handling MSC of the basis of the load level.

13. The method of claim 8 further comprising the steps of monitoring the time elapsed since assignment of the handling MSC and assigning a second MSC of the MSC pool as the handling MSC on the basis of the elapsed time.

14. The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of, after reassigning a second MSC of the MSC pool as the handling MSC, forwarding outstanding query responses to the first MSC.

15. A telecommunications system comprising:
- a switch pool further comprising a plurality of individual switches;
 - a plurality of access nodes operably coupled to the switch pool; and
 - a Routing Function (RF) adapted for associating a querying switch with a responding access node.
16. The system of claim 15 further comprising a Switch Selection Database (SSDB) operably connected with the RF.
17. The system of claim 15 further comprising a designated handling switch for receiving and responding to queries received from one or more access nodes.
18. The system of claim 15 further comprising means for redesignating a different switch of the switch pool as the handling switch.
19. The system of claim 15 further comprising a Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM).